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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council commemorates fiftieth anniversary of end of Second World War in Europe; observes minute of silence in memory of combatants and victims.

+ Secretary-General attends official ceremonies in Moscow marking anniversary of end of Second World War in Europe.

+ Situation in Croatia remains tense, with troop concentrations along cease-fire lines; Secretary-General to convene meeting on situation in former Yugoslavia in Paris on Friday.

+ International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia considers application for deferral regarding war crimes allegedly committed in Bosnia's Lasva River Valley.

+ Denmark signs Memorandum of Understanding with United Nations on provision of troops for Stand-by Arrangements for peace-keeping.

+ Ninth United Nations Congress on Prevention of Crime concludes with adoption of resolutions on terrorism, organized crime and attacks on minorities.

+ Preparatory Committee for 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements concludes second session.

+ All-inclusive dialogue on East Timor to take place in Austria from 2 to 5 June.

+ Member States owe United Nations almost $3 billion as of 31 May; $1.03 billion owed to regular budget and $1.93 billion owed to peace-keeping.

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The Security Council today commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe by observing a minute of silence in

memory of the combatants and victims. In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Mérimée (France), the Council recalled that the United Nations had been created primarily to preserve future generations from the scourge of war. The Council had been given a special role in that effort, in that the Charter of the United Nations entrusted it with the principal responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

"For this reason, it seems appropriate for the Security Council to pay tribute on this anniversary to all the victims of the Second World War and to recall the Council's firm desire to make every possible effort to help mitigate the human suffering that results from war", the statement read.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today attended ceremonies in Moscow commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. He began the day in Red Square, where he attended the Parade of participants in the Great Patriotic War and of home front veterans. Russian President Boris Yeltsin delivered an address at the start of the Parade. The Secretary-General then proceeded to Poklonnaya Hill, where he attended the Military Parade.

The Secretary-General also took part in the official opening of the Great Patriotic War Memorial on the Poklonnaya Hill. Statements were made by Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin of Russia, President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany, Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom, and President Bill Clinton of the United States. The ceremony also marked the inauguration of the Central Museum of the Patriotic War. The Secretary-General later attended a state reception given by the Russian President at the Kremlin Palace.

Tomorrow, before leaving for Paris, the Secretary-General will meet with staff at the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow. He will also be presented with a special medal by the Russian Academy of Sciences.

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The situation in Croatia remained tense today, with troop concentrations along the cease-fire lines in Sectors North, South and East, according to a United Nations spokesman. In Sector North, both sides continued to maintain a presence inside the cease-fire lines and there were some firing incidents. In Sector South, there were tensions around nine United Nations observation posts which were either surrounded or occupied by the Croatian Army. In Sector East, severe restrictions were placed on the movement of United Nations personnel.

The spokesman announced that the Secretary-General would convene a meeting on the situation in the former Yugoslavia in Paris on Friday. The meeting would be attended by, among others, Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, Force Commander General Bernard Janvier, and Thorvald Stoltenberg.

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The Trial Chambers of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia met today to consider an application for deferral submitted by the Prosecutor. The application relates to crimes allegedly committed between September 1992 and June 1993 in the Lasva River Valley in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. If it is approved, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be formally asked to defer to the Tribunal's jurisdiction and to pass the results of its investigation to the Office of the Prosecutor.

In a submission to the International Tribunal, the Bosnian Government proposed that its investigation into the incidents in the Lasva River Valley be deferred to the Tribunal.

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Denmark today signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations regarding the provision of troops for the Stand-by Arrangements for peace-keeping. Denmark is the second country after Jordan to have signed such a memorandum, although a total of 31 countries have formally agreed to participate in the Stand-by Arrangements. The Organization has been holding talks with another 10 countries that have agreed to do so in principle.

Denmark's Minister for Defence, Hans Haekkerup, told correspondents at Headquarters today that his country would provide a brigade of troops for the Stand-by Arrangements. The brigade would be available at very short notice -- as little as two weeks -- giving the United Nations the ability to respond rapidly to a threatening situation. He noted that it had sometimes taken weeks, or even months, for peace-keepers to be deployed, by which time atrocities had already been committed. Rapid deployment could prevent atrocities and reduce the need for peace-keepers in the long term.

The Secretary-General's Military Adviser, General Maurice Baril, welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which "closed the loop" after lengthy talks on the matter. He noted that United Nations officials had visited some 55 countries with a view to securing contributions for the Stand-by Arrangements. He stressed that the Organization needed high-readiness troops for the first six months of a mission. Peace-keepers needed more than "a helmet and a rifle" -- they had to be well trained and properly equipped, he added.

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The Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders concluded its 10-day session in Cairo yesterday. The Congress adopted resolutions on a wide range of issues, including the proliferation of firearms, deliberate environmental damage, organized crime, corruption of public officials, attacks on minorities and acts of terrorism.

Reflecting the concerns of many delegates over the threat posed by terrorist groups to public safety and national security, the Congress adopted a resolution condemning terrorist acts and organized crime, as well as the linkages between the two. It called for steps to be taken to draft a code of conduct or other legal instrument for combating organized transnational crime,

with due regard to its links with terrorist acts. Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran had wanted the resolution to make a clear distinction between acts of self-defence or national liberation and terrorism. Their reservations were not reflected in the text, but were noted in the final report of the Congress.

In another resolution, the Congress asked that the views of States be solicited on the possible elaboration of new international instruments against organized transnational crime. An instrument such as a convention might cover arrangements for international cooperation at the investigative, prosecutorial and judicial levels, and for the prevention and control of money laundering.

The Crime Congress -- the first held in Africa -- was attended by representatives from 138 countries, 15 intergovernmental and 48 non-governmental organizations, as well as 22 United Nations agencies and programmes. Among the government representatives were 33 Ministers of Justice and six Ministers of the Interior.

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The Second Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) has established an open-ended drafting group to continue preparing a draft action plan to guide the sustainable development of the world's cities, towns and villages. The draft will be considered by the Conference, which will be held in Istanbul in June 1996.

During the Preparatory Committee's two-week session in Nairobi, a working group completed a first reading of the draft action plan. The draft comprises a preamble, a statement of goals and principles, and a set of commitments to be undertaken by governments in support of the objectives of Habitat II. It will be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting in New York in February 1996.

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Notifications are being sent out to 30 East Timorese of various political views to attend the All-Inclusive Intra-East-Timorese Dialogue, which will be held in Austria from 2 to 5 June, according to a United Nations spokesman. The 30 come from within and outside East Timor.

The Dialogue was contemplated in the Geneva communiqué issued after the fifth round of talks between Indonesia and Portugal in January. The sixth round of talks will take place in Geneva on 8 July.

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As of 31 May, Member States owed the United Nations almost $3 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $1.03 billion was for assessments for the regular budget and $1.93 was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $527 million to the regular budget and $676 million to peace-keeping. The Russian Federation owed $41 million to the regular budget and $569 million to peace-keeping.

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